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A FEW WORDS ON THE SURVIVAL COURSE AT GARDEN

The Survival School at Camp Carson is a newly activated outfit with a very fine high quality instructor compliment. The permanent party at this school is the best of its type in the world today and they are all deadly serious in their work. They are efficient and courteous and will do anything to put their work across.

There are only certain aspects of the course which may be mentioned at this level, and I won't waste time beating around the bush.

The school endeavors to teach every crew member in minimum time how to survive off the land in which one may possibly bail out, without anyone helping him. He is taught to shift for himself in the most expeditious manner commensurate with the possibilities of survival without help of any kind and particularly without anyone knowing his existence. This latter fact is a particularly difficult procedure and many of the methods of survival are secret.

Methods of building a small fire without smoke is taught, pole-poning fish, tickling fish, hooking, gaffing, and many other methods of obtaining fish are explained. In our outfit one crew obtained eleven large rainbow trout by hitting them with a machete. Some others used a gill net. I personally made a sling shot out of a parachute rubber and willow fork. One of the instructors killed three fish with a sling shot, however, my aim was not so accurate.

This teaching of methods of fishing is just one of the many, many, courses taught and is just used to illustrate how well the school is set up and how comprehensive the curriculum has been made.

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Each crew in SAC will attend the course as a crew and will be contained in the school as a crew, with the Aircraft Commander acting as the leader of a bailed out crew in strange territory. It is a very informative type of training and establishes in each crew a confidence in their ability to "get along" in unusual circumstances. The various characteristics of the individual are most certainly illuminated to the fullest extent, when the going gets tough, and it is a fact that the crew will certainly get to know each others' personalities much better after having made this survival course together. A man's weakness and strength are brought out during the course -- and not by questioning, but by the manner by which he meets the obstacles presented to him each day. The shortage of water, the lack of heat at night, the footsores, strained muscles, the ability to take orders while under strain, the absence of humans other than those on the crew. The indecision and not knowing just what exactly is going to happen will bring out many, many characteristics never dreamed of before. All these factors are forced to light without the individual realizing it at the time. My own did, and I kept a diary of those habits and traits of character in each member of the crew I led. You might say the school is an indoctrination of events that might come to pass, although it is to be hoped it never will.

From a personal standpoint I believe the school is the finest thing that the Air Force has ever done and has the endorsement of over 140 escapees, evadees, and prisoner of war personnel who were the first class to attend.

I want to make the following suggestions concerning the school.

1. If you are going to this school, and everyone has to attend until he passes the course—KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT—just tell people that you are going to survival school. That is all.
2. Purchase a new pair of boots and break them in if you have the money-- it will pay in the long run.
3. You might see fit to take some exercise each day at least a week before getting up there. They do not run you to death, however, many of us wished that we were in better shape.
4. Do not take any unnecessary luggage because you will be restricted to the base for the entire length of stay.
5. Go with an open mind and be prepared to enjoy the visit.
6. Repeat—do not talk about the school other than the fact that it is a survival school.

/s/ Marion E. Johnson
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NOTE: This officer attended Class No 1.